

REPORT FOCUSES ON EDUCATION

Has the church's educational program limited the aspirations, growth, and achievement of children? This issue of the Report begins to examine the impact of religious education on a child's understanding of who she or he is. The Task Force challenges you to examine the educational program in your church. We welcome your observations.

Listed below are some of the findings coming out of curriculum studies and the concerns of Christian feminists.

TEXTBOOKS:

1. On the average, females are outnumbered four to one in stories appearing in religious educational literature.
2. When a woman is present in a Bible story, she is often shown as being morally weak or passive. Girls are given no models of great women in history. Stories of contemporary women perpetuate rigid, stereotyped roles. For example, although 41% of American women in husband-wife families are in the labor force, women are almost always shown involved in domestic work. Diana Lee Beach, in "Fun with Dick and Jane," talks about the impoverished images of femininity in Sunday School curriculum. Although these same images may be fostered on the television screen, in advertising, and in the public schools, Beach writes that "when we meet them in church they have an additional moral imperative; and in this case they present an image of humanity which runs counter to the teachings of Christ."
3. The God which appears in textbooks is assumed to be male. One girl wrote, "Dear God, Are boys really better than girls? I know you are a boy. But try to be fair. (signed) Sylvia" Sharon Sawatsky, a student at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, makes this observation in her paper, "Sexism in Language": "Parents, undoubtedly, influence their child's perspective of God, regardless of the language used. Male-oriented images, however, are bound to persist in minds as long as God is referred to as "Father" only, and Sunday School curriculums teach that God is our heavenly Father, as Daddy is our earthly father. The masculine imagery comes through so strongly and in so many forms, that children cannot help but get the message."

COUNSELING SERVICES:

Are counselors in our churches and church-supported schools presenting to girls and women the wider spectrum of career possibilities? Or are they subverting their individuality, self-fulfillment, and motivation by "training them to know their place"? Too often, it would seem, counselors have accepted society's ready-made goals and priorities and guided girls into jobs that don't allow for lengthy training and which permit discontinued employment, e.g., secretary, nurse, and teacher.

WORLD AS A CLASSROOM:

"All the world is a school and you don't need permission slips to get out into the halls and everybody should exchange classrooms and, Hey! what about the lawns. . . ?" These words, written by a young student, express the concept that school, whether it be the public classroom or Sunday School class, is but a part of the learning environment. The least amount of learning may, at times, happen in the classroom.

Joyce Shutt, who is doing graduate work at Lutheran Theological Seminar and is involved in a pupil-centered approach to religious education at Fairfield Mennonite Church, Fairfield, PA, shares with Report readers some of her views on education. "The compulsion to make the Sunday School lesson a preparation for life rather than

seeing the class period as an experience in life itself sacrifices the present and thereby renders the lesson irrelevant in the perceptions of the learner. Because the Bible is so directly sense and experience oriented, we need to encourage our people to have those kinds of experiences which will help them understand the God of the Bible and Bible language. . . . Each of us is limited or helped by our experiences. This is one reason why adult role models and relationships are more important for children than factual material as such. Since the Bible uses many metaphors, parables, stories, and other images to tell us about God, the child (or inexperienced adult) cannot understand Biblical imagery until he has been led through experiences relating to sheep, bread, yeast, lamps, etc. Thus for children (ten and younger) it is often better to talk less about Bible material and do specific things such as baking bread."

Joyce goes on to say that "religious growth and experience is not dependent on a body of knowledge as much as on vital human and emotional experiences. If we've never seen women assume active roles in the church or lead a worship service, we will automatically make certain assumptions about religious participation being a male experience." Confusion and frustration will result when an understanding of biblical freedom and equality conflicts with the church's dictates that no woman preach, serve communion, or help establish church policy.

EDUCATORS AS MODELS:

Women are accepted as educators of children and as missionaries. Why is it that there are so few women teaching adults in our churches, seminaries, and colleges? Is it not important for men to learn through women's experiences and insights? What self-image does a woman develop when only men tell her who she is? Is a woman's religious experience invalid?

WOMEN AS THEOLOGIANS:

Women are stressing a wholistic approach to theology. Theology has too often been largely a cerebral or verbally-oriented process. Women are talking about doing theology. By removing hierarchical structures, they believe that the people of God can become participants in the process of searching and reflection. Together, they can unite life experiences with faith-reflection.

Joyce Shutt maintains that "We tend to make the religious experience abstract and other worldly, yet the Bible emphasizes experience as the framework for revelation. A person can often 'feel' his or her way to an understanding which is otherwise too abstract and complicated intellectually. For instance, one can feel love or rejection without being able to put that into words. This is one cause for the kind of frustration and anger that girls and women often attempt to express. They sense an imbalance, but find it nebulous, beyond reach. Yet they feel the rejection that goes with pictures, materials, and a language which constantly stresses the masculine.

"One of the contributions our early Anabaptist forerunners made was objecting to intellectualizing the religious experience. Reducing faith to a dogma, creed, or an ethical code did not mesh with their picture of a life in Christ. Instead they found in the Scriptures a framework which helped integrate their lives, freeing them from all sorts of stereotypes."

Joyce's sentiments are being affirmed by many women. The February 4 issue of Christianity and Crisis, devoted to women theologizing, explains that "The process begun by women exploring theology is not viewed by the participants as an alternative to the mainstream of theological discourse; they do not choose this mode of theologizing because they cannot - by virtue of societal conditioning, 'innate character' or whatever - be part of the other enterprise. . . . Rather, women are pointing in these experiences to the reality of theology as an activity that takes place in the context of our total lives as interrelated persons."

TOWARD A CURRICULUM FOR FREE PEOPLE

by Marilyn Troyer Yoder

The conditioning of our society begins so early and is so subtle that it is difficult to recognize and label. Persons seeking to follow Christ are likely to have acquired the values of the larger culture without knowing it. Becoming the New Creation through Christ is not without risk or threat to the society. What are some of the values of our culture that run counter to Christ's example and teachings? Does our church curriculum mirror the values of our culture or challenge them radically as Christ did?

Our society places much emphasis on competition. It has pressured men to seek status by succeeding, by winning, as though self-worth depends on achievement. "But what can a man gain by winning the whole world at the cost of his true self?" (Matt. 16:26 NEB) For women the pressure has been to be beautiful, to catch a husband, to take his name (implying that her identity is then rooted in him). But Jesus chose to minister to the classes that society considered of little worth (women, children, the poor, the handicapped, minority groups, and sinners). By doing this He was showing that all have worth just by being. For women He even broke the ritual purity laws by touching the corpse of Jarius' daughter and by healing the woman who had touched His garment. For 12 years she and anything she touched were considered unclean. (Mark 5: 22-43) Jesus also defended a woman's use of expensive oil to anoint Him, calling it a beautiful thing. (Matt. 26:10)

A major way of measuring success in America is by the money one earns. We (especially women) are continually pressured by advertising media to consume more and more in order to be attractive, (See I Tim. 2:9) to have convenience and security. (See Luke 12:15) Can followers of Jesus be passive about a country using 40% (a conservative figure) of the world's resources, with only 6% of its population? Are we not compelled to try to keep our needs minimal -- to try voluntarily compassionate sharing? (See Matt. 13:44)

In America we are encouraged to be independent. "If you don't look out for yourself, who will?" Unless she happens to be married. Then a woman should become dependent on her husband for her identity, support, and reason for being. Wasn't the intention of the first creation interdependence of male and female, created in the image of God, to have dominion over the earth together, and to have fellowship with God? (See Gen. 5:1-2) Because of their (our) failure to have this happen, Jesus became (becomes) our way to the New Creation, where "there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28 JB)

The U.S. has believed that power and force can settle problems. For many military strength is a top priority. Boys are encouraged from an early age to be aggressive and strong. While girls are supposed to be passive and helpless, they are expected to use their bodies as persuasive power. But Jesus avoided manipulation in seeking to serve the other's good, bringing sight to the blind, freedom to captives, and healing to the handicapped. (See Luke 4:18, 19) Jesus went against the accepted code of behavior when he talked to the Samaritan woman at the well. (See John 4:7-30)

Our culture has also placed a lot of value on empirical logic, especially for men. His feelings should not affect his thinking and it is important that he be right -- so much so that it is sometimes difficult for him to listen to others. Jesus seemed to spend much time listening to all kinds of people, and He didn't suppress His feelings. (See John 11:35) He also encouraged women to use their minds. He taught women who

followed Him in his travels and who ministered to Him. (See Luke 8:1, Mark 15:40) The common stereotype about "woman's place" was rejected when Jesus told Martha that Mary had chosen the better way. Developing the intellectual, spiritual life was usually expected only of men, but for Mary it had high priority as well. Later, the Holy Spirit was poured out on men and women, in order to lead the discovery of all Truth. (See I Cor. 11:5, 12:6, and Acts 2:17) The purpose was (is) to help all to be faithful in living out Kingdom values.

With this background, the following suggestions or guidelines are offered for curriculum:

- We need to work at teaching the wholeness of God. Neither male nor female, but having qualities which traditionally have been ascribed to each sex. (See Luke 15:8 and Is. 49:15)

- We should include in our Bible stories the strong, intellectual, spiritual leaders who happened to be women (Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Rahab, and others) and take out stories that perpetuate the negative images of women.

- We should show that Jesus didn't mind breaking social mores and customs of His day while showing the dignity and worth of each individual, whoever he/she happened to be (the poor, the handicapped, women, persons from other races or cultures).

- In contemporary children's stories, we should strive for numerical equality of males and females represented to show neither sex is superior or inferior.

- We should emphasize that masculinity and femininity depend not on what we do, but rather on who we are. All children develop at different rates and in different ways, but all have times of happiness or unhappiness, feeling brave or timid, being active or quiet, helpful or naughty, healthy or sick.

- We should show girls and women being faithful in using their intellect, in being resourceful, brave, strong, and creative, both inside and outside the home. Boys and men should be shown being faithful by showing their feelings, and sometimes needing help. A wide variety of occupations should be included in which members of either sex can serve faithfully.

- The interdependence of all persons should be demonstrated (boys needing help from girls, girls helping fathers, boys helping mothers, men helping women). A variety of family patterns should also be shown -- including one-parent families and extended families. Also mothers who enjoy paid employment, and fathers who enjoy caring for children. Family decision-making should involve all members to the degree appropriate for their age.

- Reconciliation, rather than power or seduction, should be the focus of interpersonal relationships. Jesus went about healing the broken, not manipulating.

- Finally, we need to show the relationship between humans and the rest of Creation, resisting the pressures to consume more and rape Earth's diminishing resources.

The Task Force welcomes responses and suggestions. Unless asked to keep correspondence confidential, we will assume that we have permission to print any remarks in the Task Force Reports. Correspondence should be sent to: Task Force on Women, MCC Peace Sec-21 S. 12th St., Akron, PA 17501.

THE CHURCH, WOMEN, AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The Mennonite church has prided itself on the high academic standards of its church-supported colleges. While tallying the number of PhD's on the faculty, too little attention has been given to the status of women in higher education. Dorothy Yoder Nyce has drawn together some facts on the faculty and staff at Goshen College. Statistics from other Mennonite colleges would probably be very similar.

Dorothy's concern for such data is "for Mennonite colleges to be institutions where responsible, intelligent, self-confident faculty women are expected and respected by faculty men; where women students can find female models for achievement, pursue academic know-how, and not be thought of primarily as potential, liberally educated housewives and mothers. (And where men students absorb the expectation of fathering from men faculty.) The main reason more women are not now qualified to fill positions is that society and our colleges have not assumed they would or could and consequently have not prepared them adequately. Increased numbers is not the only or even prime goal, but a mentality/understanding that women have insight, experiences, and knowledge that must be part of anyone's college education, that learning primarily through men is incomplete learning. Competent, in or inter, not de - pendent women in academic fields, management, and organization deserve being evaluated on other than patriarchal standards too. Admissions counseling will prepare students to come to respect, learn from, and pattern after women professors."

GOSHEN COLLEGE FACULTY - Some Facts and Observations
Data Source - Directory of Faculty & Staff 1973-74; Winter Term, '74

	<u>WOMEN</u>			<u>MEN</u>		
	Total	F.T.	P.T.	Total	F.T.	P.T.
Faculty Members	38	24	14	101	79	22
Teaching	34	20	14	63	44	19
Administrative	4	4	0	38	35	3
Divisions						
I-Language, Lit, Fine Arts	9	3	6	21	17	4
II-Social Science	1	1	0	17	10	7
III-Natural Science	5	4	1	16	12	4
IV-Bible, Religion, Phil.	0	0	0	6	3	3
V-Elementary Education	5	3	2	1	1	0
VI-Nursing	14	9	5	2	1	1
VII-Intern'tl Education	0	0	0	3	2	1

27% TOTAL FACULTY are women
23% full-time " " "
40% part-time " " "

35% TOT. TEACHING FAC. are women
31% full-time " " " "
43% part-time " " " "

9% TOT. ADMIN. FAC. are women
10% full-time " " " "
0% part-time " " " "

50% of the women faculty are in Divisions V and VI.

30% of Div. I faculty are women
15% of Div. I full-time faculty are women

6% of Div. II faculty are women (plus 1 admin. woman part-time)

All women faculty in Div. III teach primarily all-women classes (home ec., phys. ed).

All other science taught by men.

No women in Div. IV, VII fac.

83% of Div. V fac. are women

88% of Div. VI fac. are women

WOMEN IN MENNONITE CHURCH STRUCTURES

In an earlier Report, we included data on the positions held by women in the Mennonite Central Committee and General Conference Mennonite Church. Our thanks to Christine Wenger from Goshen for compiling information from The Mennonite Yearbook, Vol. 64, 1973, pp. 54-74, to show the number of women who are involved in the overall structures of the Mennonite Church. Her survey shows that the ratio of men to women is 7.8 to 1. If the 16 women working in women's programs (WMSC, broadcasts) are excluded, the ratio rises to about 12 to 1. (The figures listed do not include the secretarial staff at the various offices.)

<u>Name of Board</u>	Men	Women	<u>Name of Board</u>	Men	Women
GENERAL ASSEMBLY			BD. OF CONG. MINISTRIES	8	1
Officers	3	-	Staff, commissions	39	8
Committees	<u>19</u>	<u>4</u>	WMSC	--	<u>10</u>
Total	22	4	Total	47	19
GENERAL BOARD	15	1	MENNONITE BD. OF EDUCATION	9	1
Staff, committees, representatives	<u>23</u>	<u>5</u>	Staff, committees, councils	<u>47</u>	-
Total	38	6	Total	56	1
MENNONITE BD. OF MISSIONS	9	1	MENN. MUTUAL AID	13	-
Staff	1	-	GC/MB Representatives	5	-
Treasurer, investment committee	7	-	Supervisory Staff	<u>6</u>	-
Student Services	8	1	Total	24	-
Information Services	10	-	MENN. PUBLISHING BOARD	9	1
Personnel Committee	9	-	Mennonite Publishing House	31	2
Mass Communications	37	6	Provident Bookstore Mgrs.	<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>
Health and Welfare	8	1	Total	48	4
Home Missions	10	1			
Overseas Missions	9	3			
Minority Ministries	9	-			
Relief and Service	<u>16</u>	-	<u>GRAND TOTAL:</u>	Men	Women
Total	133	13		368	47

The positions of these 47 women are:

Board Members	5
Committee/commission Members	15
Assistant Director	1
Administrative Assistant	3
WMSC	10
Broadcasting (Heart to Heart, foreign language broadcasts)	6
Editors	2
Bookstore Manager	1
Secretaries	2
Assistant Archivist	1
Hostel Hostess	<u>1</u>
	47

TASK FORCE PACKET NOW AVAILABLE

"Liberation is never an achieved goal but rather a process or journey toward freedom." (Letty Russell) The packet, entitled PERSONS BECOMING, is part of this process. Dorothy Yoder Nyce, member of the Task Force and editor of the packet, states in the packet's introduction that "None of us can say we are unaffected by contemporary trends and attitudes. How much do we intentionally, individually enter into the formation of changing images of women; how extensively do we primarily allow others to shape and mold us? Our hunch/conviction is that the more we commit ourselves to the process, the more responsible we will be for who we personally become."

"Most of the contributors to PERSONS BECOMING are Mennonite (GC, MC, and MB). Expressed here are the opinions, feelings, searching, and hope of individual writers who are willing to share them with others who seek help in evaluating contemporary involvement of women in church and society. Genuine, mutual relationships between men and women are the eventual goal. However, initially focusing a packet on women is imperative. For only on the basis of personal discovery and integrity can men and women eventually learn and make visible creative mutuality. That is our hope!"

"Packet content is organized into five units: 1) Introduction, 2) The Bible, and Women, 3) The Church and Women, 4) Male-Female Changing Relationships, 5) Minorities Within a "Minority." You, the readers, will determine how to use the articles--for individual development, small group discussion, adult class or organizational study. Adaptions are expected."

Table of Contents of PERSONS BECOMING

I. Introduction

Introduction to Packet, Writers

A Basic Introduction to 'Women's Liberation' -- Dorothy Nickel Friesen

Christian Feminism -- Gayle Gerber Koontz

The History of Feminism: U.S. and England -- Dorothy Nickel Friesen

II. The Bible and Women

"Eve the Theologian" -- Phyllis Trible

"Michal, Daughter of Saul" excerpt -- Marian Hostetler

"Jesus was a Feminist" -- Leonard Swidler

"An Examination of Scriptures, in Process" -- Dorothy Yoder Nyce

III. The Church and Women

"Women in Church History -- 2nd and 4th Centuries" -- Rosella Epp

"Anabaptist/Mennonites and Women" -- Dorothy Nickel Friesen

"Portraits of Anabaptist Women" -- Lois Barrett Janzen

Church Member Profile on the Role of Women in the Church -- L. Harder, J. Kauffman

"The Daughters of '47" -- Richard Friesen

"Sexism and the Theology of Liberation" -- Rosemary Radford Ruether

"Sexism in Language" -- Sharon Sawatsky

"The Role of Women: Time for a Fresh Look" -- Beulah Kauffman

Additional Bibliography/Resources

IV. Male/Female Changing Relationships

- "Toward a Liberated Christian View of Marriage" -- Allan and Laura Sue Dueck
 "Partners in Parenting" -- Dorothy Yoder Nyce
 "Extended/Communal Family Experience (Reba Place)" -- Dave and Neta Jackson
 "Vision of Male/Female Interdependence, Where To" -- Atlee and Winnie Beechy
 "Pursuing a Career While Raising a Family" -- Marian Claassen Franz interviewed by
 Luann Habegger
 "Single Adults' Perspective/Contribution" -- Rosemary Wyse
 Suggested List of Children's Picture Books -- Marilyn Proyer Yoder
 "Women and Health Care" -- Willard Krabill interviewed by Carole Hull
 Abortion: Listing of Major Issues/Sources for Study -- Ted Koontz

V. Minorities Within a "Minority"

- "Personhood in the New Tribalism" -- Emma LaRoque
 "Women and Welfare" -- Dorothy Anne Friesen
 "Women and Peace" -- Luann Habegger

Interspersed throughout the packet will be some poetry and art work.

Please Send Me _____ Copy(ies) of PERSONS BECOMING.

Enclosed is \$_____ to cover the cost of the packet(s). (Each packet sells for \$1.50.)

Name _____

Address _____

Source: <http://www.fishbase.org>.

Send form to:

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